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# DHEC News Release: 2013 data shows lowest level of high school cigarette use on record

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 21, 2013

### 2013 data shows lowest level of high school cigarette use on record

COLUMBIA, S.C. - New data released today by the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) show a dramatic reduction in cigarette smoking among South Carolina high school students.

Early analysis of the agency's 2013 South Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey shows that between 2011 and 2013, cigarette use among high school students fell from 23.7 percent to 15.4 percent, a decrease of 15,548 students.

"We are seeing the lowest level of cigarette use among South Carolina high school students ever recorded," said Sharon Biggers, director of the agency's Tobacco Prevention and Control division.

Evidence suggests the leading factors contributing to this decline are community-based tobacco prevention efforts, aggressive media campaigns, and a cigarette tax increase passed by the state legislature in 2010.

DHEC also has worked with the South Carolina School Boards Association, the S.C. Department of Education and schools across the state to increase the number of tobacco-free school districts from 36 in 2011 to 53 school districts today.

"The state's tobacco prevention efforts are improving the health of families in South Carolina," said Yarley Steedly with the Mid-Atlantic affiliate of the American Heart Association. "Kids can form a lifelong dependence on nicotine by trying cigarettes just once."

Preventing tobacco use and encouraging cessation among young people is critical in combating the tobacco epidemic. Each day more than 1,200 people in the U.S. die due to smoking. For every one of those deaths, at least two new young people become regular smokers. Nearly 83 percent of smokers in South Carolina smoke their first cigarette before they turn 18.

For more information on South Carolina's tobacco prevention efforts and for free resources to help quit smoking, visit <http://www.scdhec.gov/quitforkeeps> <<http://www.scdhec.gov/quitforkeeps>>.

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